



AROUND NDE

A Publication of the Nebraska Department of Education Office of Human Resources ♦ June 2009

Harouff to Retire Nearly 43 Years of Service to NDE

Marge Harouff, interim Deputy Commissioner, will step down on July 10th, which is about two weeks shy of 43 years of service to NDE. As one of the longest serving NDE employees of all time, we thought it fitting to ask Marge to reminisce about the past and share her thoughts about the present.

Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know. I majored in home economics and don't like to cook, clean, or take care of small children.

Tell us about your family. I have a husband (Dewey), a brother, and several nieces and nephews. We have no children, but we do have a 19 year old cat.

What do you do for fun? Play golf (poorly), read, and travel to new places.

What are your pet peeves? I don't like negative people who complain about things.

What's the last good book you read? "Dewey, the small town library cat who touched the world" and "My Sister's Keeper".

What attracted you to work at NDE?

Well, that is an interesting story. Back in 1966, hiring was done very differently than it is today. It was June and I was at State Leadership Training with my Crete Chapter FHA officers. The director of Home Economics Education asked me to have coffee with her, so I did. She told me that the State Advisor for Future Homemakers of America and Home Economics Consultant was leaving the position. She then asked if I was interested and I said "yes". That completed the "search" process.

We were living in Crete and my husband and I were both taking graduate classes at UNL. So, I went home that evening and told Dewey that I had taken a job in Lincoln and we could move to Lincoln and save the daily commute for him. Fortunately, he was pleased with my choice and, as they say, the rest is history.



**Marge Harouff
Circa 1966 or 1967**

What was your first position at NDE? My first position was Home Economics Consultant and State FHA Advisor. I held that position for five years (I think) and then became the Director of Home Economics.

What do you consider to be your most significant achievement at NDE? That is a really difficult question to answer because I have thoroughly enjoyed every one of the jobs I have had over the past 43 years. I really enjoyed being the State Director of Vocational Education and career education still holds a very special place in my heart. The most challenging job, however, was developing a new role for teacher education within NDE.

When Doug and Polly became Commissioner and Deputy and reorganized the administrative structure to a Leadership Council instead of an Administrative Cabinet, they asked me what

role I wanted to play. I said that I wanted to work with Teacher Education and anything else they wanted me to do would be fine. At that time, we had no rules for approval of teacher education programs or for teacher certification. The teacher educators did not meet regularly, even though there was a state organization of teacher educators. The Nebraska Council on Teacher Education (NCTE) had been functioning for a long time, but did not have a set of by-laws or organizational policies. We now have a fully functioning NACTE (Nebraska Association of Colleges of Teacher Education) which is a strong organization, as is NCTE. We also have rules that provide guidance for most of our activities. (I can't take credit for the presence of rules, however, because the addition of legal staff for NDE has been responsible for development and maintenance of our "rule system".) I have had multiple opportunities however to participate in their development.

How have your attitudes and beliefs about education in Nebraska changed during your tenure at NDE?

I don't know that they have changed that much. I have always believed that a good education is crucial to a good life. I still worry about students who struggle to be successful, when many times it is the environment in which they live that creates much of the struggle. I still believe that good educators are vital to our country's success and that they deserve more recognition and appreciation than they get.

I also think that the Nebraska Department of Education is a very important partner with a variety of groups that support quality education, and that we are better at being collaborative partners than we were in my early years at NDE.

Tell us a story about the early days at NDE.

What were things like? In the "olden days", we were a much smaller agency and were housed in a variety of locations. The Commissioner's office was on the first floor of the Capitol. Vocational Education was housed on the 10th Floor of the State Capitol, Adult Education was on the 12th Floor of the Capitol, Curriculum and Instruction was located in Scott's Pancake House at 13th and L Street. I am not sure where everyone else was located.

We spent most of our time on the road visiting schools for regulation purposes, driving old cars

that were purchased by the Department since there was no motor pool. We were lucky if the cars had radios and working heaters! We stayed in "dumpy" motels in small towns across the state and wrote our reports by hand, since we had no computers. We brought our hand-written reports back to our "secretaries" to prepare for mailing. When we held conferences or prepared mailings that required lots of copies, the materials were printed on an old mimeograph machine. Needless to say, the pace was slower then because we did not have the technology that we have today and as a result, expectations for prompt responses were not as great.

You've been acting as the interim Deputy Commissioner since Doug & Polly retired last July. What has that been like?

When Doug and Polly decided to retire, they approached me about serving as Acting Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. My first response was "NO, NO, NO!" However, after thinking about it over the weekend, it began to make some sense because I was also planning to retire soon and would obviously not be a candidate for either of those jobs. I had been around long enough to know a lot about the department activities and how we work. So, on Monday morning, I told Polly that I would reluctantly agree to do these jobs, with the help of everyone else.

I have enjoyed most of what I have done over the past year. I confess to not being very comfortable with the Commissioner's job because I strongly believe that you cannot do that job well without experience as a school administrator, and I lack that experience. I have been fairly comfortable with the Deputy's role since Polly and I have been good friends for years and I had a pretty good understanding of the responsibilities that she had. However, I did not like doing three jobs and would not have been able to do so if Sharon Katt had not assumed some of my regular duties. She has been instrumental in my retention of some sanity (if that has occurred). It would have also been impossible to do the work without Brian's support and all of you who have answered my silly questions and been patient with me as I worked my way through the various issues that arose. I appreciated the department staff before but I now have an even greater understanding and appreciation for the good work that everyone does.

"... I now have an even greater understanding and appreciation for the good work that everyone does."

You started your career as a home economics (now family & consumer sciences) teacher in Pierce Public Schools. In your opinion, how has teaching changed from then to present day? Teaching is much less “stand and deliver” than it was in 1962. Assessment strategies are obviously very different than they were then. Each teacher developed his or her own curriculum and assessment. There were no content standards, but there was model curriculum in most areas. Schools did not provide the kinds of services for students that are provided now. I believe that schools make a much greater effort to serve all students successfully, and we serve challenged students much better than we did then. Obviously technology has significantly changed the way education functions. We had typewriters, no overhead projectors, little opportunity for in-service other than Teachers Convention once a year, no webinars, email, etc., and we did not collaborate within buildings about students, curriculum, etc.

How has the Department changed? The Department is significantly larger, partially due to the state and federal programs that did not exist when I started teaching. The expectations of the schools and by the schools are greater. There was no data system and all of our reports were paper/pencil reports that were kept in file cabinets. Accounting was not automated either.

Technology has given us the ability to do our work better, to do more of it, and to provide more assistance to schools than we were able to do back then. I hope that we are seen as partners, not “police”. I believe that Nebraska schools and NDE provide greater services for our customers than ever before and I am proud to have been a part of these services.

What would you say is the most enjoyable part of your job? Which job? I have enjoyed every one of the jobs I have held. However, since my memory is failing, it is easier to remember the joys of the most recent ones. I really enjoy my work with teacher education and the opportunities that NCATE has provided to serve on accreditation

visits in other states. I also greatly appreciate all of the staff with whom I have an opportunity to work. NDE is staffed with very competent, caring individuals who have dedicated an enormous amount of their own time in addition to the time for which they are paid. This is evidenced by the email sent to me at all hours of the night and on weekends.

What is your biggest frustration? There is always more work to be done than there is time to get it done. Resources are limited and staff members give much of their own time to get the work completed. These limited resources also make it difficult to hire people that could further enhance our capabilities. Salaries comparable to those of educators in the field would improve our opportunities to build an even stronger staff.

What do you plan to do once you retire? Nothing!! That’s not likely, but I do hope to play more golf, do more traveling to places that Dewey and I have not yet been, and do some volunteer work with those more elderly than me.

Any final thoughts that you would like to share with employees? I hope that all of our employees appreciate what a good place NDE is and are proud of the contributions that we collectively make for those

who are our “customers”. We have a very good governing board and good staff who are committed to serving our various publics well. I am very proud to have been a part of this fine organization for 43 years and hope that all of our staff members appreciate the opportunities they have and that they demonstrate their appreciation by participating to the fullest extent possible.

On behalf of all NDE employees, thank you for your service and dedication to NDE. Best wishes for your retirement.

Happy Retirement!



Additional 2009 Graduates

Employee: **Susan Hagen**
Graduate: Mary Hagen
School: Westside High School
Degree: Diploma
Plans: Attend UNL; major in education



Flex Reminders

2009 Shortened Plan Year (January 1, 2009 - June 30, 2009) — Any approved expenses incurred up until September 15, 2009 can be submitted for reimbursement from your remaining 2009 Shortened Plan Year Medical FSA fund. PLEASE NOTE: These approved expenses must be submitted no later than October 31, 2009. Claims will automatically be paid from the oldest Plan Year funds first.

2009-2010 Plan Year (July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010) — Any approved expenses incurred up until September 15, 2010 can be submitted for reimbursement from your 2009-2010 Plan Year Medical FSA fund. PLEASE NOTE: These approved expenses must be submitted no later than October 31, 2010. Claims will automatically be paid from the oldest Plan Year funds first.

Unload Your Unwanted Stuff

The NDE Office Professionals Association (NDEOPA) is accepting donations for a garage sale fund raiser for the association. Donations will be accepted from June 2-10. All items donated should be clean and in good working condition.



To donate, please contact:

- Linda Kamble, 471-4502
- Jan Drbal, 471-4830

Please note that these donations are not tax deductible. All items remaining at the end of the sale will be donated to a local charity.

The garage sale will be held on Friday, June 12 from 8-5 and Saturday, June 13 from 8-noon at 2420 S. 78th St., Lincoln.

Annual Pay Raises

Both Bargaining and Rules personnel will receive a salary increase of 2.9% effective July 1, 2009.

New Employees



Brad Dirksen
Program Specialist II, Private and Postsecondary Career Schools & Veterans' Education, May 1, 2009



Barbara Schultz
Program Specialist II
Lincoln ATP
May 18, 2009

Sarah Baltzer
VR Rehabilitation Specialist
Downtown Omaha Office
May 27, 2009
(Picture not yet available)

Jennifer Jones
VR Service Specialist
North Platte Office
May 26, 2009
(Picture not yet available)

Welcome
Welcome

GREGG CHRISTENSEN RECEIVES NATIONAL DECA AWARD



Gregg Christensen

Gregg Christensen was recently selected as an Honorary Life Member of DECA by its national board of directors. He was presented the prestigious award at the DECA International Career Development Conference. DECA is an international association of high school and college students studying marketing, management and entrepreneurship in business, finance, hospitality and marketing sales and service.

The award is DECA's highest recognition and is given for outstanding service that advances the purposes and goals of the national organization. Gregg has contributed significantly to the advancement of DECA nationally through his involvement in Marketing Education and DECA at the secondary and postsecondary education levels for more than 32 years. He began his career in education as a marketing teacher/DECA Advisor at Cozad High School in Cozad in 1975. Gregg came to the Department in 1983 and served as the Nebraska State Director of Marketing Education and State Advisor for Nebraska DECA until 2005. Gregg served on the Central Region Board of Governors and the DECA, Inc. Board of Directors. In addition, he was liaison to the Secondary Advisory Council during his term on the board.

Christensen developed the Nebraska Marketing Education and DECA Business Partnership Network, an original chartered partnership under the DECA, Inc. initiative that began in 1994. He now serves as the Entrepreneurship and Career Education Specialist on the Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation Team.



HealthFitness Names Wellness Coordinator for State of Nebraska

Mike Wanetka has been named the wellness coordinator for the HealthFitness account with the State of Nebraska. HealthFitness is the vendor that is providing wellness services as part of the new "wellnessoptions" program.

Mike comes to the State of Nebraska with over 14 years of corporate wellness program coordination experience for large employers like the Nebraska Medical Center, Coors Brewing Company and ConAgra Foods. He will oversee the continued implementation and development of the wellness initiative. Mike started work on May 26th and will office in Lincoln.

Reviewing and Printing Your Paystub in NIS

Now you can use NIS to view and print your pay stub in 7 simple steps:

1. Click NIS State of Nebraska
2. Click Self Service
3. Click Pay Stub Review and Print
4. Select your pay stub
5. Click Pay Stub Review / Print
6. Click the Click Here to Print this stub link
7. Select your local printer and click Print

Your pay stub will then print to your local printer. Ahhh, now that's more like it!



SuperVision

- How do you motivate people to succeed?
- How do you find the right answer when you don't know the right answer?
- How do you get what you want?
- How can you be successful as a supervisor?
- What are some of the barriers in your way and what should you do about them?

What is SuperVision?

SuperVision is a three day session for:

- ◆ new/first-time supervisors;
- ◆ supervisors seeking improvement;
- ◆ people looking to advance into supervision/management; and
- ◆ team leaders.

Why?

The workshop was created in response to demand. Feedback from employees (for example, at the Governor's Annual Summit) and input from agencies identified the need to provide support and training for supervisors.

Impact of Supervisors

Perhaps the most important factor in employees' success, retention, and job satisfaction is the relationship with their immediate supervisor. One of the keys to greater successes from our employees is improving the quality of our supervision and leadership.

Imagine...

...a group of approximately 15 participants led by 3 facilitators, introducing and practicing integral supervisory tools (interaction, feedback, coaching, appreciation, etc.)

...balancing theory and reality...highly interactive...and allowing sufficient time for exploration and customization.

What Past Participants Have to Say About SuperVision Training

- I would highly recommend it not only for a supervisor, but an employee as well.
- I would definitely recommend it. Great tools.
- I will be a strong advocate for this course. Please encourage supervisors to attend.
- I feel I can go back to work and use tools and make a difference. There is hope!
- So many interesting ideas and topics to think about. Great for new supervisors and old pros. Everyone will learn something from this workshop.
- Gets your mind moving!

Are You Ready?

Upcoming sessions are scheduled in Lincoln as follows:

- June 16-18
- August 12-14
- October 6-8
- December 9-11

The cost is only \$99 for the 3-day session. Morning and afternoon snacks are provided. Lunch is on your own.

For More Info/To Register

Check out the [SuperVision website](#) or contact: Shannon.Moncure@nebraska.gov (471-3053) Bill.Oberg@nebraska.gov (471-4122)



Legislative Update on Bills Affecting Employees

LB 34 — Require employment verification of employees by employers and by contractors who want to be awarded a public contract. [Did not advance past committee hearing.](#)

LB 107 — Require an employer to provide an employee a reason for termination. [Did not advance past General File.](#)

LB 167 — Allows state employees to participate in an employee discount program. Strikes the current statutory requirement to obtain employee consent to pay by EFT. [Signed by Governor March 18, 2009.](#)

LB 187 — Changes employee contribution rates for employees participating in the School Retirement Plan (School Plan). Currently, School Plan participants contribute 7.28% of their base wages to the retirement plan. Beginning 9/1/09 and ending 8/31/14, School Plan participants will be required to contribute 8.28% of their paycheck. Beginning on 9/1/14, the contribution rate would revert to 7.28%. [Signed by the Governor May 26, 2009.](#)

LB 188 — Changes provisions relating to retirement programs for county, state, and Nebraska State Patrol employees. The time period to apply for vesting credit for years of participation in another Nebraska governmental retirement plan expanded from the first 30 to 180 days of employment. Plan participants who were participating in the retirement system prior to January 1, 2003, who terminate employment on or after January 1, 2003, but return prior to having a 5-year break in service will be required to participate in the Cash Balance plan. The mandatory distribution for those reaching 70 ½ years of age will be waived for calendar year 2009. The time period for a surviving spouse to elect an annuity option will increase from 120 to 180 days. Records obtained by the NPERS Board could be withheld from the public unless publicly disclosed in an open court, open administrative proceeding, open meeting, or disclosed by a public entity pursuant to its duties. Conditions under which the deferred compensation plan may accept rollovers are specified. Information obtained by the NPERS Board for the purpose of administering the retirement plans would not be considered public records except for: employee name, the retirement plan in which the employee

participates, and the date the employee's participation in the plan started/ended. [Signed by the Governor May 13, 2009.](#)

LB 322 — Prohibits nepotism and supervision of family members by executive branch officials and employees. [Signed by the Governor May 13, 2009.](#)

LB 366 — Increase the mandatory contribution rate under the State Employees Retirement Act. [Did not advance past committee hearing.](#)

LB 403 — Prohibits state agencies and political subdivisions from providing federal, state, or local public benefits to individuals not lawfully present in the United States. Every public employer and public contractor must use a federal immigration verification system to determine the work eligibility status of new employees physically performing services within the State of Nebraska. [Signed by the Governor April 8, 2009.](#)

LB 449 — Allows a person under the age of sixty-five who is receiving a disability benefit from the Nebraska School Employees Retirement System to work fewer than fifteen hours per week for a school, as long as the examining physician certifies that the beneficiary has a permanent disability. [Signed by the Governor April 22, 2009.](#)

LB 514 — Change workers' compensation disability compensation provisions. [Indefinitely postponed.](#)

LB 538 — Exempt government employee retirement benefits from income tax. [Indefinitely postponed.](#)

June is National Safety Month



Injury Prevention is the theme of National Safety Council's 2009 National Safety Month observance. Throughout June, National Safety Month activities will address teen driving, distracted driving, fall prevention at home and work, and overexertion at home and work (who can't relate to that one?).

Click [here](#) for the National Safety Council's schedule of [National Safety Month weekly topics](#).